

**Congressman Childers Votes for Unprecedented Investment in Student Aid, Passes Amendment to Improve Veterans' College Completion Rates** □

September 17, 2009

Washington, DC – Congressman Travis Childers (D-MS) voted today to make an unprecedented investment in aid to help students and families pay for college, at no cost to taxpayers. The Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act (SAFRA) (H.R. 3221) will expand access to affordable college education, transform early education opportunities, and build a world-class community college system. In addition, SAFRA contains an amendment introduced by Congressman Childers to help increase student veterans' college completion rates.

"Today's legislation marks a crucial step towards rebuilding our economy, making sure all young Mississippians have the ability to attend college or get career training, and growing a highly-skilled competitive work force," said Congressman Childers. "This commonsense reform will eliminate billions in waste while simultaneously expanding access to essential educational opportunities to build a stronger, more competitive Mississippi economy for the future.

"Making sure our veterans have access to quality education is an important part of any education reform. I am proud to have introduced an amendment that provides veterans with the resources they need to complete a college degree. I am deeply grateful to our veterans for their honorable service to our nation, and am pleased that this legislation will help veterans to take full advantage of the training and education benefits they have earned."

Congressman Childers' amendment to SAFRA will require campus Veterans Resource Officers to act as a link between student veterans and mental health care providers at the Department of Veterans Affairs. With the support of Veterans Resource Officers on university and college campuses, student veterans will be better connected to vital services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs and better prepared to complete their studies.

"I also commend SAFRA's unprecedented investments in community colleges," said Congressman Childers. "Community colleges in Mississippi are some of the best in the nation and they play an important role in preparing students for tomorrow's workforce. A community college education is one of the best investments a student can make."

SAFRA will reform the system of federal student loans to save the taxpayers \$87 billion and will direct \$10 billion back to the Treasury to reduce the federal deficit. SAFRA will change the way the student loan system functions by originating new loans through the government's Direct Loan program, but will maintain competition among private lenders and non-profits to provide top-notch customer service for student borrowers.

With the largest-ever investment in higher education, this bill will also significantly increase government grant and loan assistance for college tuition payments. Pell Grants, already distributed to more than seven million students, will increase to \$6,900 by 2019 from \$5,350 today. Students from Mississippi's First Congressional District could see a dramatic increase in their Pell grant awards over the next ten years, with total amounts going from \$56 million to over \$139 million.

SAFRA also keeps interest rates low on government-subsidized loans, makes substantial investments in early childhood education, expands the Perkins low-cost loan program to every U.S. college, and simplifies the process of applying for student financial aid. In Mississippi's First District, college applications are anticipated to increase from nearly 38,000 to a projected 57,000 in 2012-13.

*A pro-gun, pro-life Mississippian, Congressman Travis Childers (D-MS) represents the First Congressional District in North Mississippi. He is a member of the fiscally conservative Blue Dog Coalition and serves on the House Agriculture and Financial Services Committee. Congressman Childers co-chairs the reestablished bipartisan Congressional Rural Caucus and was appointed to the bipartisan Second Amendment Task Force. For more information, visit [www.childers.house.gov](http://www.childers.house.gov)*

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